

Dear All,

I hope you are safe and well in these very curious times. I, for one, have found the lockdown both beneficial and frustrating in equal measure - whilst, being on holiday not being able to get out and about in the way that I would normally have been able to - visiting friends and family, being with one of my daughters (the other is doing her PhD in Dundee so no chance of seeing her in the flesh, although FaceTime and WhatsApp have greatly helped in seeing her regularly, albeit remotely) balanced by being forced to be at home and slowing down my usual frenetic pace of life, and this has been greatly helped by the lovely weather, and a daily walk with the dog who can't believe her luck! I am writing just as the 3-week lockdown extension is likely to be confirmed and so we continue as we are. We are 'back to school' now, and my teaching is, once again, through a video link. It has, actually, worked quite well but is quite intensive and feels very different, even though the content and the way I teach (certainly my 6th Form) hasn't needed to change in any great way.

I know that many of you have been in touch with Kevin and Barbara following our postponement of the St. Matthew Passion concert in March. Looking back, it was clearly the right decision, disappointing and upsetting as it was, as is the same situation with our summer concert too. I, for one, had an acute sense of loss at the time, as I felt that we had all developed such an emotional attachment to the piece, as well as were on the verge of delivering a truly special performance of one of the great choral works ever written. Ultimately, we have lost a season. However, given what the world is going through at the moment, this is a small inconvenience and we must keep things in perspective, hard as it may be at times.

So, moving forward, the Committee and I are in discussion about the way forward and, whilst I don't want to put words in people's mouths and no firm decisions have been made, I think that our conversations as well as the feedback from you - the Membership - tends to indicate that we had an investment in the Bach that is regrettably unfulfilled and that there is an appetite to fulfil it! This is, certainly, my feeling, and I have put forward to the Committee a proposal that, broadly, the programme that we had devised for 2019-20 should, essentially, be translated to 2020-21 and that we use this as a launchpad to celebrate the start of the MFC 2nd Century. Whilst not being able to mark the Centenary, what better way to mark and signal the next chapter instead. I hope that you will all agree with the sentiment and get behind this.

Clearly, just re-calibrating the dates for September onwards would not be sufficient in my view to satisfy the musical needs of MFC (spending the best part of 4 terms on one piece would not be right) and so our discussions at the moment are looking at ways to elaborate the first part of the season, and I'm sure that Kevin and/or Barbara will be in touch with you about that once these ideas start to crystallise.

I know that a number of you are enjoying some online choral work at the moment and this is something that I am considering on offering. I haven't got my head around this yet I have to say, and it may not be feasible, but let me keep having a think.

I want to thank the Committee in all of this. As we came to the denouement in the decision-making and in the aftermath, it was clear just how caring and passionate they are in their duties for MFC. You should know that you are in very good hands. Kevin, in particular, was (and you won't be surprised to know) incredibly well-informed and had taken huge amounts of input from experts in the field, and we should be indebted to him for his guidance and sage advice. You will also know that the costs of the concert were really very considerable and that MFC, whilst grateful to all the professional musicians (soloists and orchestra) for agreeing to take substantial and generous reductions in the fee, were still exposed to considerable cancellation fees. However, Mike's negotiations have meant that such losses, whilst painful, were able to be taken on the chin. However, it does mean that the cloth-cutting (and, thus, musical programming) may need to be sharper in the coming years than it might have been previously.

In the meantime, thank you for all your support and your efforts this year. I felt that our preparation for the SMP was the best for any concert that I have worked with you on, and I am

enormously grateful to you for everything that you did to make the journey so fulfilling for me - and I hope for you too! It is a shame that we weren't able to show the world our Bach, but I hope that we will have another opportunity to do so next year which, actually, heightens my anticipation for it even more I have to say.

Thank you, once again, and see you when I see you! And, most importantly, stay safe and well.

All best, as ever,

Jonathan